



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 February 2022

by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W2845/D/21/3282167

1 Graham Hill Road, Towcester NN12 7AB

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Peter Smith against the decision of West Northamptonshire Council.
 - The application Ref WNS/2021/0037/FUL, dated 9 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is Single storey timber home office adjacent to side of property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for Single storey timber home office adjacent to side of property at 1 Graham Hill Road, Towcester NN12 7AB, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref WNS/2021/0037/FUL, dated 9 March 2021, and the plan numbered 6757/P02A, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The home office hereby permitted shall not be occupied at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the dwelling known as 1 Graham Hill Road, Towcester NN12 7AB.

Procedural Matters

2. I observed during my site visit that the proposed home office had been constructed. Nonetheless, I have dealt with the appeal on the basis of the development shown on the plan numbered: 6757/P02A.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its surroundings, including the street scene.

Reasons

4. The appeal relates to a detached house with an L-shaped plan form, which incorporates two existing projections of differing widths toward Northampton Road. These respectively accommodate a study and double garage. Access is taken from a private drive parallel to Northampton Road. The houses in the locality vary in design and their relationship to the highway but those closest to Northampton Road are consistent in their use of lighter coloured materials and the presence of landscaped frontages. Together these factors make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

5. While the Council's Design Guide¹ suggests front extensions can be detrimental, they are not prohibited. In the case of the appeal property, its front elevation is not symmetrical due to the presence of existing projections. The proposed home office will be adjacent to the eastern flank wall of the garage, forward of the house. This will continue the forward projection of built form beyond the main elevation of the house, but the proposal will be of a relatively compact scale and mass, set down from the apex of the garage. It will therefore read alongside the remainder of the house, the plan form, composition, and proportions of which will remain legible.
6. The presence of planting at the rural edges of the wider estate of houses in this part of Towcester softens its visual presence, but development is still clearly apparent from Northampton Road. The absence of tall hedge planting, similar to that found immediately north, increases the visibility of the proposal from the street. Nevertheless, the building has been designed and constructed to a high standard, with timber cladding. Its soft appearance will therefore assimilate with the lighter materials of the house and its surroundings, including the remaining vegetation in the street scene.
7. There may not be other buildings of the nature of the proposal in the locality, but each application and appeal must be determined on its own individual merits, and a generalised concern of this nature does not justify withholding permission in this case.
8. In light of the above, the proposed development will not have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and its surroundings, including the street scene. Hence, the proposal accords with the design aims of Policies SS2(b) and SDP1(a) of the South Northamptonshire Part 2 Local Plan 2011-2029 and guidance contained within the Council's Design Guide.

Other Matters

9. Several interested parties have raised concerns that proposal could result in comings and goings that will be harmful to neighbouring occupiers. Given that the access to the home office is taken beyond other houses, this concern is realistic. However, as outlined in the Officer Report, such concerns could be alleviated by a planning condition to restrict the office to use ancillary to the occupation of the appeal property.
10. I am mindful that there are no residential permit or other controls over parking in Graham Hill Road, so residents and visitors alike could park there without restriction. These are circumstances that are likely to be repeated throughout the estate of houses, so are not specifically limited to the immediate context of the site and, these circumstances could not, with any degree of certainty, be directly connected to the proposal. Nonetheless, the use restriction referred to above is also likely to reduce the potential for parking in the vicinity of the site.
11. The alleged removal of hedge planting is no doubt of annoyance to residents, but there is no substantive evidence before me, in respect of the ecological and noise reduction properties of the original hedge. In light of my findings on the main issue, there would be sufficient justification to require replacement hedge planting as part of the appeal scheme.

¹ South Northamptonshire Design Guide (2017).

Conditions

12. The standard conditions requested by the Council on the appeal questionnaire, and in subsequent correspondence, are not necessary as the development has been carried out. However, I have included the approved plans in the effective part of the decision. As outlined above, landscaping is not required to screen the development from view, so I have not included the condition suggested by the Council for a scheme of planting with a potential height of two metres.
13. In order to protect the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, a condition is attached to restrict the proposal to ancillary use, but I have not utilised the terms outlined by the Council, as these could have unreasonably restricted home working of a business owned by the appellant.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR